together. For grace and skill in literary expression the choicest of Chinese poetry and prose can be placed, unashamed, beside the rest of the world's best.

The Chinese characters seem to be an indigenous invention. Certainly, in spite of theories to the contrary, no conclusive proof has yet been given of a foreign origin. We have seen that primitive types were in use as far back as the Shang. Even then they were often so complex and so skillfully inscribed that they may have had back of them a long history. It is usually impossible to ascertain the most archaic form of a given character, for in the early days of the script a character was often written in a variety of ways and it is not feasible to determine the original with certainty. However, at least some of the methods in which characters were created seem clear.

A number of characters are conventionalized pictures of objects, It is not difficult to see in the present B and an older predecessor 0, a portrayal of the sun, and in H, in an older form D, the moon for which it stands. So, too, *Hi* is not unlike a fish, If formerly <|., suggests a horse, and in ^, earlier ? and ?, meaning "sheep," the horns and legs of a ram are clearly seen, ffl is a little less obviously a field, and even the present character for door or gate PJ shows the two leaves and posts of that useful object. Some hundreds of characters could and did come into existence in this way.

Some are attempts to put ideas into picture form. Thus * is a convenient representation of "middle" or "center," and H is obviously the numeral "three." Often abstract ideas were presented to the eye by combining characters which originally

were pictures of objects. Thus the verb "to sit" is written £g, which is probably two men ^ on the ground **db,** although in some early forms this is not indisputable. SB "bright" or "brilliant" is a combination of characters for the sun and moon. Sometimes the scribes employed the picture for an object with which the abstract idea was associated. Thus "high" is 3|?, apparently in an early form meant to portray a tower. It seems probable, too, that in some instances the spoken word for an abstract idea which had the same sound as a word for a concrete object might be written with the character which had been devised for the latter. Thus one authority accounts for